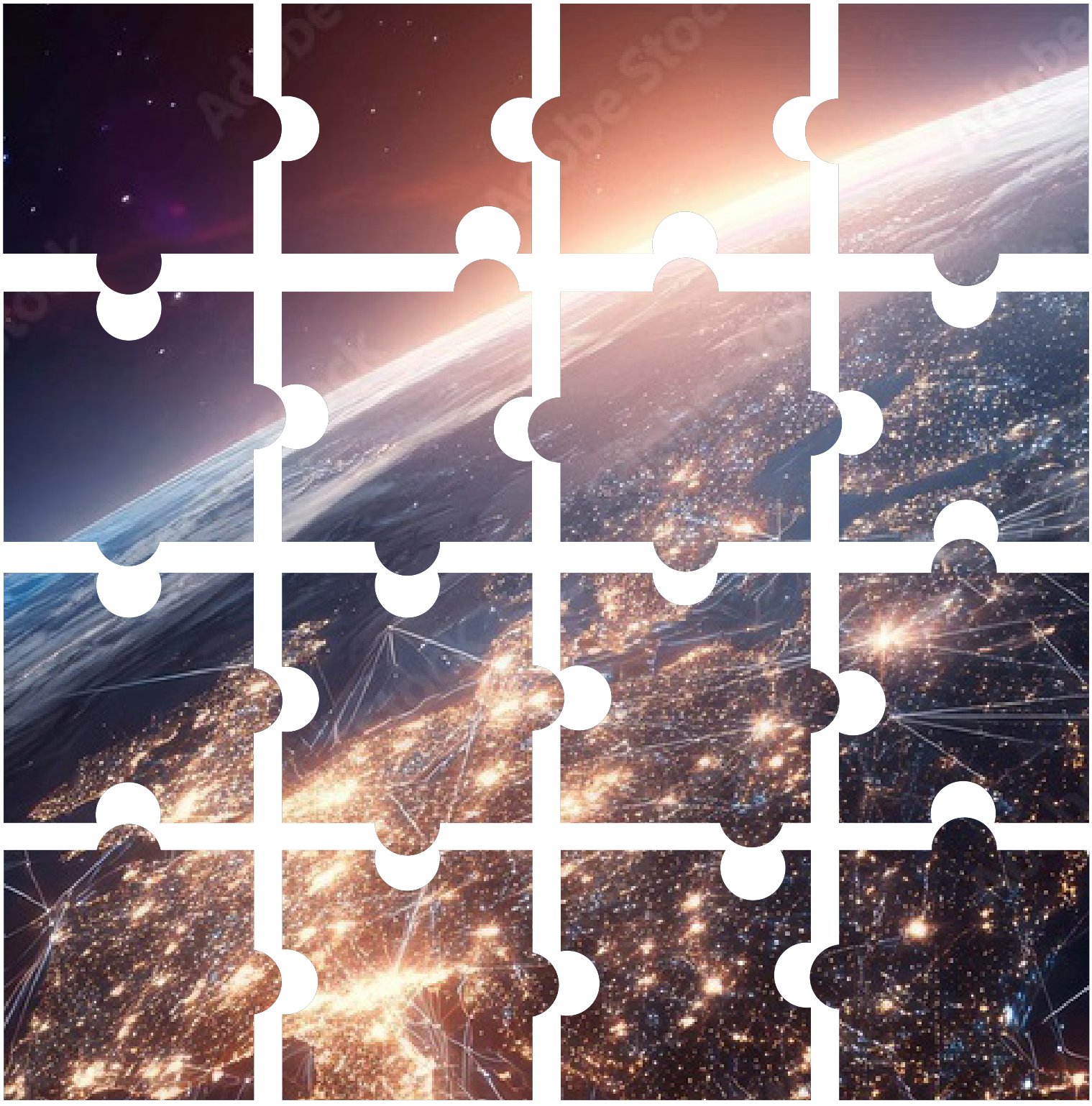
EUROPEAN ACCREDITATION



EA MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT

Facilitating cross border trade with reliable goods and services

THE BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION

Acceptance in the marketplace of the EA MLA - and therefore of the conformity assessment results provided by conformity assessment bodies accredited by EA MLA signatories - is of major importance for the development of industry and business opportunities by removing the need to re-test or certify a product in each country.

ENHANCES CROSS-BORDER TRADE

Accreditation strengthens Europe's internal market by eliminating trade barriers, ensuring better regulation among EU Member States, and facilitating the acceptance of certified products and services.

BUILDS PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Accreditation guarantees consistently high standards, reinforcing trust in the quality of products and services in a complex global marketplace.

REDUCES PRODUCT FAILURES AND RECALLS

Independent product testing minimizes failures and recalls, ensuring reliability and compliance with standards.

The significance of accreditation was reinforced by Regulation (EC) No 765/2008, which established a legal framework for accreditation services across Europe. This regulation designates European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) as the body responsible for overseeing accreditation, ensuring harmonization and mutual recognition across EU Member States.

OUR MISSION

We ensure confidence in accredited conformity assessment results through the harmonized operation of accreditation activities, supporting European and global economies.
The EA Multilateral Agreement (MLA) enables mutual recognition of accreditation systems among EA's National Accreditation Bodies (NABs), ensuring the acceptance of conformity assessment results, such as certifications, verifications, inspections, and test reports, across the European market.

This reduces costs, eliminates technical barriers, and adds value for businesses and consumers.
Global trade can be hindered by varying technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures. To address this, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade encourages the recognition of conformity assessment results across borders. The EA MLA supports this goal by creating a network of competent accreditation bodies, fostering seamless trade between European and non-European markets.

For NABs outside Europe, agreements with EA under the EA-1/13 framework allow their accredited conformity assessment bodies to gain recognition within the European market, further facilitating international trade.

EA MLA KEY FIGURES (at end 2024)

44
members signatories to the MLA

47
members

+35,000
Accreditations delivered by EA MLA signatories

ACCREDITATION OF ACTIVITY

LABORATORIES

- Testing and Medical examinations - EN ISO/IEC 17025 and EN ISO 15189
- Calibration - EN ISO/IEC 17025

CERTIFICATION BODIES

- Product certification - EN ISO/IEC 17065
- Certification of persons - EN ISO/IEC 17024
- Management systems certification - EN ISO/IEC 17021-1

INSPECTION

- Inspection - EN ISO/IEC 17020

VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION

- Validation and verification - EN ISO/IEC 17029

PROFICIENCY TESTING PROVIDERS

- Proficiency Testing Providers - EN ISO/IEC 17043

REFERENCE MATERIAL PRODUCERS

- Reference Material Producers - EN ISO 17034

BIOBANKS

- Biobanking - EN ISO 20387

EA MLA PROCESS

1- APPLICATION

The National Accreditation Bodies apply for MLA signatory status for specific scopes. The EA Secretariat reviews the application and appoints the team of peer evaluators.

2- PEER EVALUATION

The team performs the document review (quality management system documents, procedures of the National Accreditation Body, etc.) and a pre-evaluation is conducted where applicable. Then, the team carries out the on-site evaluation. The evaluation combines the evaluation of the management system at the office with the observation of assessments carried out by the National Accreditation Body. The evaluation team presents the findings at the closing meeting to the National Accreditation Body.

3- REPORT & DECISION

The team drafts the evaluation report. A task force group (TFG) appointed by the EA MLA Council management group issues a recommendation based on the evaluation report to issue a recommendation for consideration by the EA MLA Council. The EA MAC decides and the EA publications and website are updated accordingly.

PEER EVALUATORS

The management of peer evaluators is carried out in accordance with EA-2/02 M:2022 EA Procedure for the Evaluation of a National Accreditation Body, Annex 1: Process and procedures for selection, qualification and monitoring of evaluators and the appointment and composition of the evaluation team.

The initial selection and qualification (authorisation) of evaluators are carried out by the Secretariat, which may give priority to specific candidate evaluators in order to fulfil the needs of the peer-evaluation system and to ensure a balanced contribution of all MLA signatories. Ensuring a sufficient level of peer eveluation resources is a crucial obligation for each EA National Accreditation Body (NAB) member of the EA MLA.

DISCOVER THE EA MLA IN 2 MINUTES

EA producted a video to present the EA MLA, and all the various areas where accreditation is involved in our everyday life.

THE EA MLA MARK

The MLA mark can be used by the NAB with its own logo or mark.

The MLA mark can be used by accredited CABs with the NAB's accreditation mark to demonstrate the competence of the CAB and compliance with the standards and rules as expressed in the scope of accreditation.

EUROPEAN
RECOGNITION

ACCREDITATION, A GLOBAL BENEFIT

Acceptance in the marketplace of the EA MLA - and therefore of the conformity assessment results provided by conformity assessment bodies accredited by EA MLA signatories - is of major importance for the development of industry and business opportunities by removing the need to re-test or certify a product in each country.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The importance of accreditation to the EU's and EFTA's economic infrastructure is recognised in Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 which provides the legal framework for the provision of accreditation services across Europe.

The Regulation (EC) No 765/2008 covers the operation of accreditation in support of voluntary conformity assessment and conformity assessment required by European legislation. It provides Commission Directorates with the legal basis to ensure confidence in the consistent and harmonised implementation of legislation across the European Economic Area (EEA) regarding the use of accreditation.

According to article 11 (2) of Regulation (EC) No 765/2008, national authorities in the Member States shall recognise the equivalence of the services delivered by those National Accreditation Bodies which have successfully undergone peer evaluation by EA (MLA signatories), and thereby accept the accreditation certificates of those bodies and the attestations issued by the conformity assessment bodies accredited by them.

CONSUMERS

Accreditation impact positively every aspect of our daily life, from the safety of the products we buy to the quality of the environment we live in. The accreditation of testing, inspection and certification ensures that these activities are carried out by competent organizations. The influence of accreditation may not always be recognised or understood by the consumer but it plays an important role in ensuring they have access to goods and services of consistent and reliable quality and safety.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND REGULATORS

Accreditation can be used to support the implementation of European or national legislation. It provides a 'stamp of approval' to demonstrate compliance against agreed standards and requirements.

Accreditation minimizes risk as decisions can be based on reliable certificates or reports and there can be greater confidence in the data being used to establish baselines for monitoring and enforcement.

The EA MLA provides a framework that allows Governments to rely on data from accredited organizations in other countries.

INDUSTRY AND THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Exporting and accessing new markets become easier and less expensive since products tested or certified by an EA MLA-accredited body do not need to be re-tested or re-certified for foreign markets.

Importing goods and services with an EA MLA-accredited report or certificate is less risky and cheaper because accreditation confirms conformity to recognised standards of consistency and quality, and businesses can therefore also avoid the costs of re-testing.

Being recognised internationally, the EA MLA opens new opportunities in the global market.

Buying conformity assessment services from an organization accredited by an EA MLA signatory can also help businesses differentiate their services by providing evidence of technical competence, impartiality, and compliance with international requirements within their supply chain.

AN EXAMPLE OF BENEFIT OF THE EA MLA

How can a manufacturer sell a product in Europe with the guarantee of the CE mark?

By affixing the CE marking to a product, a manufacturer declares that the product meets all the legal requirements for CE marking and can be sold throughout the European Economic Area (EEA). This also applies to products made in other countries that are sold in the EEA, When you buy a new phone, a teddy bear, or a TV within the EEA, you can find the CE mark on those products, which means that all companies are held accountable to the same rules. So, how does this work?

1/ Appointed National Accreditation Bodies
To allow EU manufacturers to sell their products in the EEA, EU Recognized National Accreditation Bodies will accredit EU Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs). This means that they will assess and confirm the technical competence of CABs offering, for example, testing services in compliance with the EU legislation.

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2/ Accredited Conformity Assessment Bodies
Then, the EU Conformity Assessment Bodies will deliver conformity assessment services to confirm that the products comply with the EU requirements (legislation, standards, and other relevant specifications).

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3/ / Importers and distributors
The importers shall ensure that conformity assessment procedures have been carried out and that product marking and documentation drawn up by manufacturers are available for inspection by the supervisory authorities.
The distributor makes a product available on the market after it has been placed on the market by the manufacturer or the importer.

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4/ EU manufacturer
Manufacturers play a vital role in ensuring that products placed on the extended single market of the EEA are safe. It is their responsibility to carry out the conformity assessment, set up the technical file, issue the EU declaration of conformity and affix the CE marking to a product.
Once the products have been marked, the manufacturer will be able to sell them on the EAA and benefit from a competitive advantage in terms of reputation and credibility for future consumers.

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5/ Consumers
EU consumers expect all products placed on the market to be safe and they will experience the same level of health, safety, and environmental protection throughout the entire EEA.

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What does this mean at the end?
Businesses can demonstrate compliance with EU legislations and can differentiate their products and services, as well as be able to exploit overseas opportunities opened up through mutual recognition arrangements.

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